

**Sabah RCI silent on naming culprits, analysts say**  
**Malaysian Insider**  
**August 12, 2012**  
**By Clara Chooi**

KOTA KINABALU, Aug 12 — Sabahans may have little reason to rejoice over the newly-formed Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) into the state's population of illegal immigrants, a 40-year-old problem that the government now wants solved in six months without identifying the culprits or the reasons for issuing identity cards, say analysts.

While they agreed that establishing the RCI was a step in the right direction for the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN), the panel's investigation scope, announced yesterday by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, is said to have fallen short of expectations.

For one, none of the panel's eight reference terms specifically touch on identifying the person or persons behind the alleged award of Malaysian ICs and citizenships to illegal immigrants.

It also does not seek to uncover the reasons behind these awards, which many have claimed was engineered by BN as a ploy to stay in power.

Most significant of all is that the panel has not been tasked to recommend punishment for those found responsible of giving away Malaysian citizenships in exchange for votes, if there should be any such case.

Fingers have often been pointed at Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and "Projek IC", an initiative allegedly started by the former prime minister to help BN keep its chokehold over Sabah by giving out ICs to the foreigners.

Without these terms, the wings of the five-member RCI team will be clipped and the decades of frustration felt by Sabahans over their state's lost sovereignty would not be assuaged.

Speaking to The Malaysian Insider last night, Merdeka Centre director Ibrahim Suffian (picture) agreed that BN's advantage from last night's RCI announcement would only be a "momentary" one.

In the weeks and months ahead, he said, Sabahans will be studying the panel's investigation scope closely and keeping a close eye on any development in the probe.

Ibrahim said many are baying for blood over the state's burgeoning population of illegal immigrants as the decades of lost job opportunities, security and economic problems allegedly caused by these foreigners may not be so easily solved in just six months.

"The RCI will increase expectations on the part of ordinary voters. People will want to see these terms closely. They will discuss it and they will want to see — who is at fault? And how do we avoid this in the future?" he said.

More important to Sabah voters, Ibrahim said, was whether the RCI's recommendations to the government would actually be implemented.

"We have had many RCIs before where the panel makes its recommendations but the take-up rate is sometimes very slow," he pointed out.

Sabah-based political analyst Dr Arnold Puyok agreed with Ibrahim.

The lecturer told The Malaysian Insider that BN was likely to score some brownie points with voters through the RCI's formation but their ultimate question would be on how the government plans to implement the panel's recommendations.

"People are thinking now — what's next?" he said.

Puyok agreed that the RCI's terms did not specifically mention identifying the person or persons responsible for the alleged "citizenships for votes" claim, which is the source of the problem in the first place.

"Reading the terms, I can see that there is no chance for those responsible to be prosecuted," he said.

"So in that respect, the RCI could either work for or against the BN. In time, we will know," he said.

But Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) president Datuk Yong Teck Lee has a different view.

The former Sabah chief minister said in a text message that the RCI's public hearings may be where the names of those responsible for Sabah's increasing migrant population will be revealed.

But he added that this would depend on the panel's acceptance of submissions on how government officers and "Umno operatives" were allegedly involved in the matter.

"SAPP will make submissions to the RCI. The RCI is a nightmare for BN," he said.

The RCI's terms of reference, as announced yesterday by Najib, will focus on identifying the number of illegal immigrants in Sabah who have been unlawfully given Malaysian ICs or citizenships and if their names have been included in the state's electoral roll

Hakcipta © 2012 The Malaysian Insider

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/sabah-rci-silent-on-naming-culprits-analysts-say/>